

By K. Connie Kang

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom is urging the Bush administration to push for democratic reform and respect for human rights in Myanmar, also known as Burma.

In a letter to President Bush, chairman Michael Cromartie said, "U.S. leadership is desperately needed to keep the international focus on demands for democracy and the protection of human rights in Burma."

In the letter, the panel made a series of recommendations. One called for the government to establish a task force under the National Security Council and name a special coordinator to handle bilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts.

The commission said protecting human rights in Myanmar would "greatly strengthen peace and stability in Southeast Asia."

The commission is an independent, bipartisan panel that monitors religious freedom abroad and advises Congress and the White House.